

A CHRISTIAN TO BE COPIED.

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While some good people are overpraised, there are others who hardly get their dues. One of these too much neglected worthies in Barnabas, the "Son of Consolation," or "Son of Exhortation," as some Bible scholars prefer to render it. How seldom do we hear his name mentioned either in the pulpit, or the prayer meeting, or anywhere else! Yet to my fancy he is one of the very noblest of the New Testament heroes. As a blind person may detect the presence of a rose by its fragrance, so this good man's character exhales a peculiarly sweet perfume of godliness to those who will study it. He was just the sort of Christian needed in all our churches in these days. The Bible is very chary of eulogies; but it does not hesitate to call him "a good man and full of the Holy Spirit." In three or four vital points he is a Christian to be copied.

1. He was a native of the island of Cyprus, which was renowned for the worship of Venus, and the very name "Cyprian" is still a synonym of impurity. But as the brightest light is kindled on a point that comes out of a bed of charcoal, so this light-bearer of the Gospel came out of a very dark region of debauchery and idolatry. His original name was Joseph; but another name was given him after his conversion to Christ. They christened him Barnabas, the Son of Consolation. That is a name to be proud of, and it comprehends a vast deal; it signifies a helper of the weak, a guide to the wandering, a comforter of the sad. My old friend, William Arnot, has well said that this name bespeaks a fine character. "To possess consolation is to give it, not to give it is to possess it. The more of it you have, the more you retain for your own use. This circle, when it is set agoing moves perpetually, like the sea giving out its waters to the sky, and the sky sending back the boon by the rain and the rivers to the sea again." The power of this man laid in the same quality that characterized nearly all those first converts to Christianity, and that was their supra-bounding sympathy. Their sharing with each other of the good things and their "breaking of bread" together from house to house were tide-marks to show how high the flood of love was rising in their hearts. "Communism" is a very ugly word as it is often spelled by demagogues and by the Devil; but there is a genuine communism of heart and Christly sympathy that is sorely needed in many of our churches in order to keep them from degenerating into exclusive social clubs. Barnabas, if in New York or

Brooklyn or Boston now, would likely be found in a mission church for the half or the whole of every Sabbath. He would show us how to bridge the chasm between wealth and poverty, and between wealth and poverty, and between Christian culture and city heathenism. On many an evening during the week, he would be found beside the squalid bed of sickness, or amid the swarming outcasts of the slums. The secret of power with General Booth and his Salvationists is their *personal sympathy* with the wretched and the wrecked. When the members of our churches become "sons of consolation" in the broadest sense of the word, bestowing not merely their dollars, but their time, their presence and sympathy of their hearts upon the unchristianized masses we shall have a primitive and pentecostal revival. Personal sympathy is worth more to the poor, the suffering and the neglected than silver and gold. Pulpits speak only for an hour or two and then only to those who fill pews before them; it is by *sermons in shoes*—and plenty of them—that the suffering and the sinning only can be reached. The curse of too much of what passes for Christianity is its selfishness.

2. There is another plume in the coronet of Barnabas. He was the father of systematic beneficence. We are told that having land he sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the Apostles' feet. Having given his heart to Christ, he consecrated a goodly portion of his property to his Master's service. Some others of the new converts may have done this as soon as he; but he is the first one mentioned. He is, therefore, to be regarded as the pioneer in that long procession of systematic givers which reaches on to our times, and numbers in its Ranks the Nathanael Cobbs and James Lenoxes and William E. Dodges, and many other bountiful stewards of the Lord; and not only they who gave of their abundance, but every conscientious Christian who gives according to his means—however humble—and gives spontaneously. Barnabas did more than fling loose money into Christ's treasury. He sold real estate and contributed the proceeds. That looks as if their were real self-denial in the transaction, and that the man would stand a pinch for Christ's sake. When he was converted, the work reached not only the bottom of his heart, but the bottom of his pocket.

Now, in this respect, this Cyprian convert is worthy of imitation; for the prevailing sin of the day is self-indulgence. It is eating like a canker into the life of many of our churches. It hankers after rosewater preaching in rosewood pulpits,

and leaves its pew empty on unpleasant Sabbaths. It robs Christ's treasury in order to fare sumptuously and to keep up a showy turn-out. It is ready to deny Jesus Christ, but not to deny self. Barnabas heads the line of a genuine apostolic succession. In its ranks are the hard-toiling seamstress and washerwoman who drop their hard-earned dollar into the collection plate; in its ranks also is the mission school teacher who sallies off in a driving storm to carry his Gospel loaf to the group of hungry children. Those educated girls who went South to teach ragged Freedmen their alphabet and their Bible belong to this same high peerage of divine nobility. Brethren, let us pray for more Barnabases and Dorcases, and for more of the *grace that pinches!* The conversion that never lowers a man's pride and never empties a man's pocket is a pious sham.

3. There is a third star in the crown of our model-man Barnabas. He was not only a son of consolation and the pioneer of unselfish benevolence, but he was also the first city missionary and the first foreign missionary that we read of. Into gorgeous and idolatrous Antioch he went as the herald of the Gospel; and he carried that Gospel through the streets with such power that "much people was added to the Lord." He needs assistance, and bethinks him of Saul, and hastens off to Tarsus after him. As Sir Humphrey Davy discovered and developed Michael Faraday, so Barnabas first brought out the fiery vigor and indomitable zeal of the man who was yet to become the chiefest of the Apostles. Henceforth for a time Barnabas and Saul are linked in missionary labors, as we now associate together the names of Moody and Sankey. They both begin and carry on the most effective kind of Christian work, and that is by *personal effort*; the converts whom they made were the earliest who ever bore the name of "Christians." From Antioch they depart on a foreign mission to Cyprus, and in his native island we lose sight of our faithful Barnabas. He had built his monument and written his name among the immortals.

There is some encouragement in endeavoring to copy this pioneer in good works, because he was not an entirely sinless character. We are told that there arose a contention between Paul and Barnabas, and probably, as in most quarrels, both may have been somewhat to blame. Barnabas was not therefore one of the inimitable "pieces of perfection." I sympathize with my dear brother Spurgeon, who always fought shy of "the holiness people" who trumpeted their own sinlessness. He once dismissed three of his